United Nations S/PV.4271

Security Council

Fifty-sixth year

Provisional

4271st meeting

Friday, 2 February 2001, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ben Mustapha	(Tunisia)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federaion	Mr. Lavrov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchynski
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Briefing by His Excellency Major General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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01-23767 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of February, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council during the month of January 2001. I am sure that I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Mahbubani for the great diplomatic skill with which he presided over the Council last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Briefing by His Excellency Major General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I request the Chief of Protocol to escort His Excellency, Major General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to a seat at the Council table.

Major General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The members of the Security Council highly appreciate the initiative of President Joseph Kabila to meet with them at this stage of his first visit outside the Democratic Republic of the Congo since he assumed its presidency. The members of the Council attach great importance to this meeting and pin high hopes on its conclusions. We wish President Kabila every success in his noble mission to lead his people towards peace, security, stability and progress.

One year ago, on 24 January 2000, under the presidency of the United States, the Security Council convened an important meeting at which leaders of the States signatories of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement participated. On that occasion, the leaders reiterated their commitment to the Agreement. The meeting enjoyed the strong and broad support of the international community in general and of the Security Council in particular. The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, which upholds the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, gave high hopes that the conflict in that country might be ended and the peace and security of the neighbouring States restored.

Since then, the Lusaka Agreement has gone through critical phases and faced many challenges. Foreign troops have not withdrawn from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the national dialogue has come to a standstill. The full deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) has been delayed. Throughout this time, the suffering of the people of the Congo has been perpetuated by the war.

The Council has followed with grave concern the developments in the situation and dispatched a mission of its members. The Council has adopted a number of resolutions and presidential statements. In this context, I would cite in particular resolution 1304 (2000), adopted on 16 June 2000 under the presidency of France in the wake of a meeting of the Security Council with the Political Committee of the Ceasefire Agreement.

The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement remains the most appropriate framework for reaching a negotiated settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Security Council expects all parties to the Agreement to demonstrate their commitment to the relevant Security Council resolutions and to the Agreement and to take concrete steps to move the peace process forward. In this regard, I pay a special tribute to the role played by the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

Last Friday's address by President Kabila to the Congolese people reiterated his support for the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and his resolve to pursue national dialogue and reconciliation. He underscored his commitment to cooperating with the OAU and the United Nations and to the deployment of MONUC; his demand that foreign troops withdraw from his

country's territory; and his desire to establish good-neighbourly relations with neighbouring countries.

The Security Council has consistently stressed the need for respect for the Democratic Republic of the Congo's sovereignty, territorial integrity and control over its natural resources. It is also concerned that the sovereignty of all States be equally respected. President Kabila will find the Council in full support of his contributions to moving the peace process forward. The Council's interest in the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo is reflected in the series of meetings which it intends to convene this month on that issue, in particular its meeting with the Political Committee of the Ceasefire Agreement. The members of the Council look forward to the achievement of concrete results at these meetings that will help to revive the peace process and assist the brotherly people of the Congo in fulfilling their aspirations.

I now invite the Secretary-General to address the Council.

The Secretary-General: We are meeting today to discuss once again one of the biggest challenges currently facing Africa and the United Nations — the challenge of bringing peace and stability to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the region around it.

Let me begin by welcoming President Joseph Kabila to the United Nations and congratulating him on his inauguration as Head of State of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I have already had the opportunity of extending to President Kabila my sincere condolences on the loss of his father.

The Lusaka Agreement, signed in July and August 1999 by six States and three rebel movements, has yet to be translated into action, but for the last two weeks the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) has reported almost no ceasefire violations throughout the country. This is surely a moment of opportunity, which must be seized by the parties and those who wish to help the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The time appears ripe for a resolute effort to implement the Lusaka Agreement, including through a genuine dialogue among all Congolese on the future of their country.

I welcome the calm that has descended on the confrontation lines between the various forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and hope that all the parties concerned, and all their military commanders, will take the necessary measures to ensure that it continues. Any regional initiative aimed at achieving this objective is to be commended.

In this regard, I urge the parties to adhere to the plan for the disengagement of forces they agreed to in Harare on 6 December. Within its current resources, MONUC has already begun to take the measures necessary to support the disengagement. In my forthcoming report to the Security Council, as requested in resolution 1332 (2000), I will propose the elements of a revised concept of operations for MONUC deployment in support of the disengagement plan. Once the Council has adopted the new concept, MONUC will take the necessary steps to carry it out.

Peace and stability will not return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours unless and until all Congolese are engaged in a meaningful dialogue to decide how their country is to be governed. By the same token, all countries of the region should continue to engage in dialogue to resolve this conflict. This requires the new Congolese authorities to confirm their strong commitment to peaceful negotiation, notably by taking steps to liberalize the political climate in the country. I am glad to note that the new Government is prepared to work with Sir Ketumile Masire, the neutral Facilitator appointed under the Lusaka Agreement, with the help of a co-Facilitator. I look forward to the early identification of such a co-Facilitator by the Congolese parties, with the help of the Organization of African Unity. Any support that can be provided by other heads of State in the subregion will surely also be welcome.

By its resolution 1304 (2000) of 16 June 2000, and reaffirmed in resolution 1332 (2000), the Security Council demanded the withdrawal of Ugandan and Rwandan forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in conformity with the timetable of the Ceasefire Agreement and the Kampala disengagement plan of 8 April. I look forward to the early withdrawal of all foreign forces, as provided for by the Lusaka Agreement. In future phases of its operations, with the approval of the Security Council, MONUC will be ready to deploy to assist in this important objective.

The commitment to peace that President Joseph Kabila has already demonstrated is welcome for many reasons. Respect for the ceasefire could permit humanitarian agencies to gain access to populations in need. Greater attention can then be paid to human rights and the rights of children, including child soldiers, once the fighting has stopped. It would also be possible to address outbreaks of communal violence not directly related to the main conflict, such as those in Ituri and South Kivu.

Finally, it remains only for me to wish President Kabila every success. I am sure I speak for the international community as a whole in assuring him that he will enjoy our full support in his efforts to restore peace and promote democracy and development in his great country in the heart of Africa.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

It is my honour now to give the floor to His Excellency Major General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

President Kabila (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to speak here for the first time before the Security Council. The Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo would like to thank the President, as well as the Council as a whole, for having involved us in today's discussion of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Before continuing, I should like to extend my warmest congratulations to the President on his assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. My delegation is pleased to see the Security Council being led this month by the representative of a friendly country, Tunisia, as this principal organ of the United Nations responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security once again addresses the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I should also like to offer my thanks to the Permanent Representative of Singapore for the new dynamism he was able to bring to the Security Council during his presidency of the Council last month.

Lastly, I would like to pay genuine tribute to a man who spares no effort in order to give significant impetus to our worldwide Organization and who deserves our greatest respect: Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General. My country owes him a great deal for the persistent and intensive efforts that he has made to promote the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and, in particular, to bring peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As I take the floor here for the first time in the Security Council, I remember the historic day, 24 January 2000, when President Laurent-Désiré Kabila, in this same Chamber, called for a withdrawal from our national territory of the armies of aggression of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, on the basis of Security Council resolution 1234 (1999) of 9 April 1999. A year after his speech, the situation has not changed despite the many efforts made. Indeed, on the contrary, the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has lasted for almost three years now, and the casualties have been extremely heavy. Some 1.7 million people died in 22 months in the occupied territory in the eastern part of our country, according to a report from the International Rescue Committee issued in May 2000. Today, that figure is clearly low, because it does not take into account the additional casualties that have occurred since May 2000 due to the continuing war of aggression since then.

The illegal exploitation of the natural resources of our country — primarily tantalite, coltan, timber, gold and diamonds — that finance the war effort of the aggressor countries is a devastating phenomenon, and it will have serious consequences for present and future generations in my country. An end must be put to this illegal exploitation.

My Government would like to assure the Security Council that it will do its utmost to cooperate fully with the Ad Hoc Expert Group, made up of eminent internationally recognized individuals of proven competence. We reiterate to them our fullest confidence and support.

It is our ardent hope that the panel of experts will submit to the Security Council in March a full report on the situation, which will enable the Council to take decisions on the basis of complete information. We would like the report to be a fair and equitable one that can establish the truth about the tragic plundering of the natural resources of our country.

My Government has often spoken to the Security Council of the very deep-seated yearning for peace felt by all sectors of the population of my country. This is why, given the challenges involved in the restoration of peace and the strengthening of national harmony in a

country that has been torn apart, I have decided on behalf of my people to work towards a policy that fosters dialogue and reconciliation.

I invite the authorities in Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi to return to a better sense of good-neighbourliness, with a view to achieving a peaceful settlement of differences and to cooperating fruitfully for progress in Africa.

Therefore, in accord with and in consultation with the allied countries that support us in facing the aggression, we are going to examine ways and means of relaunching the Lusaka Agreement so that it will not only lead to an effective ceasefire but will also restore peace to the Great Lakes region, while at the same time preserving the fundamental attributes of our Republic: independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity, which the Council has continuously reconfirmed.

To be effective, the Lusaka Agreement must be reinforced by a binding mechanism that could set an example by punishing the parties that violate the ceasefire and do not respect the measures taken for deployment and disengagement. We ask the Security Council to consider during this month of February a new and precise timetable that would cover four points: the disengagement provided for in the Harare agreement, the deployment of United Nations troops, the unconditional withdrawal of uninvited forces and, finally, the withdrawal of troops from countries that were invited. To confirm the commitment of the Congolese Government to take an active part in this process, I would like to point out to the Council that my Minister for Foreign Affairs is present at this meeting.

As I said in my address to my nation on 26 January 2001, the problems linked to democratization must be resolved within the framework of the inter-Congolese dialogue. Accordingly, we reiterate our urgent appeal to all political players and members of civil society to join unreservedly in preparatory efforts to ensure the success of the dialogue, notably the continuing efforts to complete the Libreville process.

In my capacity as the person responsible for my country, I urge all of my Congolese brothers, regardless of their social origins, regardless of their views, and including those who have taken up arms, to come and sit down with us around a table to talk of peace and of how to organize the future political landscape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to talk of the urgent need for our country to rebuild and to lay the foundations of sustainable development for the well-being of the Congolese people.

This is why, once again, I launch an urgent appeal to the international community to support the Congolese people as they move towards this dialogue, which must be among the Congolese people without any interference. For how can we not accept for ourselves what we undertook in support of our neighbour, Burundi, and what was unanimously supported in this Council? In that way, we demonstrated our nation's strong resolve to contribute not only to the return of peace to our own country but also to the peace of our neighbouring countries, and even more particularly of those that are occupying a large part of our national territory.

If a solution to the crisis in Burundi is indeed an indispensable and inseparable element of the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, because of the consequences for our own territory of inter-ethnic conflict in that country, the same also applies to the need for democratization in Uganda and Rwanda. National consensus in all of our countries is a prerequisite for stabilization in the Great Lakes region.

In the course of this month, this Security Council is certainly going to take a decision on the possibility of phase II deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). We reiterate to the Council and to the entire world the commitment of my country to cooperate closely with MONUC so that it can effectively discharge its mandate, in particular as regards the urgent deployment of forces to Congolese territory in order to restore peace.

We would venture to believe that the Security Council will stand by its commitments, inter alia, by swiftly deploying its forces in accordance with the resolution I mentioned earlier and the subsidiary disengagement plan adopted recently at Harare, which provides for an initial deployment along the line of demarcation, followed by another deployment along the adjacent borders with Uganda and Rwanda, in order to provide security along our common borders.

We welcome the mutual understanding and close collaboration between MONUC and our Government, and we would like to convey to you our great appreciation for the quality of work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General,

Ambassador Kamel Morjane, who has enhanced the prestige of United Nations diplomacy. We encourage him to continue along the road that he has considered useful and necessary to restore lasting peace to our country. We are grateful to him, and we are sure that the Congolese people as a whole are also grateful to him.

By way of conclusion, may I say that my Government and I have given ourselves the task of continuing to rebuild our devastated country and to meet the expectations of our people. We want to bring together all Congolese, while respecting their differences, because it is the Congolese people as a whole we must serve in its diversity, as well as in its common love for the country. We must also respond to the people's deepest aspirations for a better quality of life.

Once peace has been regained and territorial integrity restored, our work will involve, with your assistance and that of the international community, preparing free and transparent elections so that the people can choose the person who will preside over the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are also among those who believe that the peaceful settlement of disputes and recognition of the inherent dignity of every member of the human family and of their equal rights are the basis of freedom, justice and peace in the world. This is the Congolese approach, which must, in my view, lead us to the restoration of peace in the Great Lakes region.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to thank His Excellency President Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for his kind words addressed to me and to my country, Tunisia.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): Before I begin, I want publicly to recognize Tunisia's extraordinary contribution to the cause of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition to personnel of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), Tunisia has dedicated three of its finest diplomats to this effort. I refer, of course, to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Kamel Morjane, Assistant Secretary-General Hedi Annabi and you, Mr. President. We are deeply grateful to the Government of Tunisia for devoting so much of the coming month to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we pledge our full support and cooperation.

I join in welcoming President Kabila to the Security Council and to New York. We express to President Kabila, both in his official role and his private capacity, our deepest condolences for the death of his father and late President. We are deeply moved that in his time of grief, President Kabila has reassured the Congolese people and the international community of his commitment to moving ahead with the peace process. The eyes of the world were on President Kabila when he assumed his office. They followed him to Paris, Washington and now New York. Now is the time for bold and statesman-like steps on the part of all the parties, including the United Nations. We must all work together.

There are four important messages that we want to communicate to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

First, whether in the field of peacekeeping, humanitarian relief or development, the United Nations is and will remain a friend of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, it gave us new hope when President Kabila's first words to the Congolese people and the international community were a renewed call for peace and democratization. We warmly welcome President Kabila's clear affirmation of his Government's commitment to the successful implementation of the peace process and his pledge to continue and intensify cooperation with MONUC.

Thirdly, we support the Lusaka process and urge all the signatories to ensure that peace finally comes to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Fourthly, and most importantly, now is the time for action. We want MONUC to deploy and peace to succeed. For this to happen we require an operational plan for the disengagement of forces and their redeployment, and the parties must create and sustain the conditions needed for further MONUC operations. This includes the provision of adequate assurances for the security and freedom of movement of United Nations and related personnel.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has a right, under the United Nations Charter, to demand that uninvited foreign forces depart its territory. The Governments of Rwanda and Uganda

have a right, under the United Nations Charter, to demand that the Congolese territory not be used as a launching pad for attacks against their countries.

There is an obvious political settlement here. The Governments of the region need to work together, rather than against each other, to bring about what they and the entire region need: a stable and secure Democratic Republic of the Congo. The pursuit of common interests is the only means by which this crisis will be resolved.

While foreign Powers cannot dictate the internal politics of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we believe that the call for democratization is not a foreign demand. The new political dispensation called for under the Lusaka Agreement is and must remain the sovereign domain of the Congolese people. As the Security Council delegation witnessed in Kinshasa, political parties, civil society, organizations and religious communities are calling for political participation and accountable governance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. United States support for democratic development within the Congo is based on the belief that democracy and long-term stability are inseparable. We also believe that the best means to delegitimize armed opposition is to allow unarmed political opposition to flourish.

The Lusaka Agreement provides for an inter-Congolese dialogue under neutral facilitation. We hope for early progress in re-engaging the facilitation appointed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and we hope also that the dialogue can begin. We continue to believe that Sir Ketumile Masire is an outstanding former head of State who can fulfil his mandate, and we hope that he will reach out to the parties in the spirit of compromise and democracy for which his country is so well known.

It has been almost a year since the Security Council authorized phase II of the United Nations mission in the Congo. The Secretary-General delayed the deployment of additional United Nations personnel because conditions on the ground were not yet conducive to a successful mission. This was not a popular decision, but we believe that it was the right one, as neither the Lusaka Agreement nor the Council's resolutions had been implemented. If President Kabila's recent statements are followed by concrete actions by all the parties, the United Nations will, at last, be able to play its full role in the peace process, and my Government wants that to happen.

The critical short-term task remains a fully effective cease-fire and the disengagement of forces. While disengagement cannot substitute for a broader peace process, it will provide the enabling environment for progress on the political front. The Secretary-General is revising the concept of operations to reflect the changing situation on the ground. Just as we have supported his decision not to deploy additional personnel until the situation allows, we will support deployment as soon as conditions permit, and we look forward to his advice.

Pueto in Katanga province remains a potential flashpoint, but it also represents an opportunity for the parties to put the peace process on track. In this zone in recent months the cease-fire was violated. We welcome Rwanda's readiness to withdraw from Pueto, and we urge movement there as soon as possible.

President Kabila has created an opening for the peace process by his reaffirmation of the Lusaka Agreement, his offer to work with his neighbours on security issues and a pledge of full cooperation with MONUC. It is up to the other Lusaka signatories to respond with initiatives of their own.

Turning the Congo into a battleground of foreign armies inflicts misery on the Congolese people and adds to instability in the region. Rwanda and Uganda must present the Government of Kinshasa with credible, concrete actions that demonstrate that they are committed to peace, the withdrawal of their forces and the territorial sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a unified nation. All the State parties need to work together based on the mutual recognition that armed non-State actors using the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo pose a threat to regional stability. Whether we are discussing UNITA, the Front pour la défense de la democratie (FDD) or the Allied Democratic Front (ADF), the common denominator is that the Congolese people want them all to leave their country.

One group in particular, former members of the Rwandese Armed Forces (FAR) and Interahamwe, poses a major threat to regional stability and to the successful implementation of the Lusaka Agreement. Just as the international community is justified in calling for the withdrawal of Rwandan and Ugandan forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, so

too must we call on all the Lusaka signatories to abandon support for the ex-FAR and Interahamwe. In that way, the path will be open for the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement of the ex-FAR and Interahamwe, as well as of other armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the end of the day, common security interests of all the States in the region converge, and those common interests can form the basis for peace. All involved have the responsibility to achieve the peace their people so clearly need and so justly deserve. We reiterate our call for the parties to go beyond statements and to use the coming days to take concrete steps needed to disengage their forces, bring about the conditions for further deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and begin the national dialogue called for in the Lusaka Accords.

My Government wishes President Kabila every success.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the United States for the kind words he addressed to Tunisia and to its diplomatic representatives.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having placed the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the heart of the Security Council's agenda for the month of February, during which you will be presiding over the work of the Council. I want also to thank the Secretary-General for the message of hope he has just conveyed to the Security Council: hope that peace will be restored in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I thank President Joseph Kabila for his presence here today, and for the statement he has just made. On behalf of the French leadership, I extend our condolences to President Kabila on the tragic death of his father, President Laurent-Désiré Kabila. We believe that President Joseph Kabila's decision to come to New York to address the Security Council, only a few days after officially taking office, is particularly significant and encouraging. That gesture reflects a desire for true relations of trust and partnership between the United Nations and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we hope that those relations will continue and deepen.

In his statement, President Joseph Kabila has just reaffirmed an approach based on dialogue and reconciliation, which we welcome. His inauguration statement before the Congolese nation had already laid the foundations for that. Further, President Kabila discussed this with President Chirac two days ago in Paris, and President Chirac indicated to President Kabila that he supported his avowals of peace and dialogue. We are particularly encouraged by President Joseph Kabila's commitments with respect to peace and to the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement and the relaunching of the inter-Congolese dialogue. Also encouraging is the President's wish to facilitate the deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), under the fine leadership of Ambassador Kamel Morjane, to whom we convey our greetings. The role of the international community here is resolutely to encourage and support the Congolese authorities on the path of peace and dialogue, while, of course, giving them time to build these new approaches. The international community must encourage the other signatories of the Lusaka Agreement to respond without delay to the overtures made by the new President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My country's position on the resolution of the Congolese crisis was clearly reflected in the recent conclusions adopted by the Council of Ministers of the European Union. Here, my delegation wishes to recall several simple principles that should guide the implementation of the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

First, it is essential that all the parties implement their commitments under the Lusaka Agreement and that they respect the various resolutions of the Security Council. The withdrawal of foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially the withdrawal of uninvited forces, is imperative. Without such a withdrawal there can be no lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, as President Kabila has just forcefully said, the plundering of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must cease. This ongoing violation of the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is unacceptable. Those who carry out such activities should in due course be

punished by the international community. France eagerly awaits the final report of the panel of experts on the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Thirdly, the withdrawal of foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be accompanied by rapid deployment of MONUC. MONUC observation of the disengagement and withdrawal of forces and the regular reports on this matter to be made to the Security Council will serve as a guarantee to the parties and will encourage them to carry out their commitments. All parties concerned must effectively ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of MONUC personnel. France is also well aware of the security problems that could arise along the borders with some countries neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We continue to support the principle of MONUC deployment in border areas, especially Goma and Bukavu.

Finally, the relaunching of national dialogue, in a framework that can undoubtedly be adjusted, should facilitate the solution of the specific political difficulties of the Congolese. As President Kabila has just said, the door to inter-Congolese dialogue must be open to all, without preconditions and without exclusion.

France encourages President Joseph Kabila to continue the constructive talks with Burundi that have been underway for some months — as he has just said he will. As President Kabila has just indicated, peace in the region must be comprehensive and lasting if it is to lead at last to the implementation of the policies of development, growth and democracy for which the peoples of the Great Lakes region long.

Today's gathering inaugurates a series of meetings which will include the visit here on 21 and 22 February, under your presidency, Sir, of the members of the Political Committee of the Lusaka Agreement. We must take the opportunity vigorously to relaunch the peace process and to hasten the settlement of a conflict that has caused all too much harm to civilian populations. It is in that spirit that France will work in the coming weeks — a period that we hope will be decisive.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of France for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): We convey very warm greetings to you, Sir, as you assume the presidency of the Council for the month of February. We are very pleased that you are leading the Council this month.

This is a special opportunity for the Security Council to welcome His Excellency President Joseph Kabila soon after his assumption of the presidency of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It was encouraging to hear the commitment of the President to pursue the Lusaka peace process. We noted in particular his determination to make fresh efforts to bring peace to the country and to hold free and fair elections. His willingness to extend full cooperation to the United Nations observer mission, and his assurance to us of his support for the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council, are very encouraging.

Today's meeting provides an opportunity to think together about a new departure in our common endeavour for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Secretary-General has given us a perspective on the course of action ahead. We are in full agreement with him. We also appreciate the briefing on the situation that we received this morning from his able Special Representative, Ambassador Kamel Morjane.

It has been widely recognized that there can be no military solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is important that all concerned parties come to the same conclusion. According to our understanding, the Lusaka Agreement provides for a workable compromise for all parties. We urge the leadership in the region, as well as the rebel movements, to take a pragmatic approach to the peace process. In this context, we look forward to our meeting here next week with President Kagame of Rwanda. The insistence on finding a military solution or taking irreconcilable positions has not helped resolve the conflict. It has only increased the suffering of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and their neighbours.

We understand that efforts are being made for a regional meeting, possibly at the summit level, involving all signatories of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. For practical reasons, such a meeting should preferably be held prior to our meeting here with the Political Committee later this month. We shall

be expecting concrete steps from the Political Committee and the Joint Military Commission meetings this month.

In order for the Council to take a decision on full deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) at its authorized strength, we will certainly want to see some real progress on the ground. There have been arguments in favour of MONUC deployment as the forces withdraw, in order to prevent any security gap. For that to take place, the parties will have to demonstrate their commitment by effectively withdrawing as per the Kampala disengagement plan and the Harare subplan. We shall be guided by the advice of the Secretary-General with regard to the further deployment of the United Nations observers, assisted by the troops.

A fundamental element in the peace process is the inter-Congolese dialogue for national reconciliation. We shall call upon the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to revive the facilitation process at an early date.

Bangladesh particularly welcomes President Kabila's pledge to prepare free and transparent elections to enable the people to choose for themselves a leader to preside over the destiny of the country. The war of attrition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has cost the lives of thousands of people; it continues to destroy the lives of thousands more; it has kept a whole nation hostage. The people of Congo have suffered some of the worst atrocities, and this must stop.

We call upon the leadership in the region to forget the acrimonious past and commit themselves to a future of mutual trust and confidence. It is time they took a decisive step to end the conflict. A peaceful, united and prosperous Democratic Republic of the Congo will be in the best interests of all the people of the region. The Security Council and the rest of the international community will stand behind them in their efforts. A courageous first step has to be made here. Today, with President Kabila's commitment to bringing peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we have a window of opportunity. We should seize that opportunity in earnest.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all to thank you, Mr. President, for having taken the initiative to convene this important public meeting of the Security Council to consider the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I should also like to welcome the participation in this meeting of Major General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to whom I renew the heartfelt condolences of the people and the Government of Mali for the tragic death of President Laurent-Désiré Kabila. I should also like to thank President Kabila for the important statement that he made. Finally, I should like to welcome the Secretary-General to this meeting and thank him for the message of hope that he has just conveyed to us regarding the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With regard to that situation, I should like, in the context of today's debate, to make several points.

First, Mali supports the search for a peaceful settlement to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the renewed commitment of President Joseph Kabila to work for a solution that gives priority to dialogue and reconciliation. The continuation of the inter-Congolese dialogue and the Libreville process will, in the view of my delegation, be an effective means of achieving national reconciliation and arriving at a stable external environment. It is a fact that peace processes and reconciliation go hand in hand. That is why we support the appeal made to all political players, including civil society, and to neighbouring countries aimed at achieving a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Secondly, we believe that it is of fundamental importance to create the conditions for a lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the basis of the full implementation of the Lusaka Agreement. In this context, we believe the relaunching of the Lusaka process to be a vital necessity. We encourage the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to consider the ways and means of relaunching the process in order to achieve an effective ceasefire and to contribute to the restoration of peace in the Great Lakes region.

In the same context, we welcome the efforts made by the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization of African Unity and by President Frederick Chiluba, who is presiding over the regional initiative, and we encourage them to persevere in their efforts.

Thirdly, my delegation believes that the rapid implementation of the second stage of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is essential for ensuring that the conflict in that country is resolved. In this connection, we support the appeal made to the signatories of the Lusaka Agreement to reaffirm their commitment to the implementation of that Agreement and comply with its provisions, particularly those relating to the implementation of the plan and the subplans for the redeployment of forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the deployment of MONUC. It is also important that Security Council resolution 1332 (2000) of December 2000 be fully implemented.

That is why we also look forward to the next report of the Secretary-General on the new concept of operations of MONUC. We also look forward to contributing usefully to the Security Council's meeting with the members of the Political Committee established under the Lusaka Agreement, scheduled to take place on 21 and 22 February.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that, given the gravity of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and all that is at stake, the international community must act speedily and practically. The Security Council in particular must shoulder all its responsibilities and firmly uphold the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mali will do its full share in that necessary and urgent process.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): I warmly welcome you, Sir, to the Council chair and offer you my compliments for starting your presidency with this important meeting.

I congratulate President Joseph Kabila on his assumption of the presidency of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and offer my delegation's warm thanks to him for his extraordinary initiative in coming to New York so early in his presidency and seeking this meeting with the Council. I also renew the United Kingdom Government's and people's sincere condolences on the loss of his father.

The United Kingdom values highly the opportunity to have this discussion today. We must make the most of it to confirm our commitment at last to moving the peace process forward. The principles are all set out and were signed up to more than 18 months ago in the Lusaka Agreement. The Kampala and Harare disengagement plans have followed. We now need to see the solid, steady implementation of the peace process which has been missing for the past year or so. This means a strong focus on the Lusaka Agreement and we welcome President Kabila's clear reaffirmation of its importance today.

I think there are three key areas to address in the run-up to our meeting with the Political Committee on 21 and 22 February. On the military side, we welcome the general restraint shown by all the parties in recent days. This needs to be sustained and built upon. It is essential for the parties to be in contact and to get back to work on disengagement and withdrawal plans, mapping out achievable, concrete steps and setting a realistic timetable. They then need to take forward those plans. In this light, it is welcome news that President Kabila met yesterday in Washington with President Kagame and we would be most grateful if the President or his Foreign Minister could give us a summary account of that meeting or an assessment of its import. There can be no progress towards a political solution without direct communication between the opposing parties to the conflict.

This Council insists on a political solution to the conflict. A military solution is clearly unachievable, but the political track can only truly come alive if credible progress is made in creating a political framework that will give a voice to all Congolese people. If we all put the rights and wishes of the ordinary, peace-loving people of the Congo first, we will reach a solution to this conflict surprisingly quickly.

We wish therefore to see the early establishment of an open, inclusive dialogue, as set out in the Lusaka Agreement, that will allow the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to map out a new future for their country and suffer no longer the presence of foreign troops on their soil. We encourage the Congolese authorities to reengage with the facilitation appointed by the Organization of African Unity in taking this forward. I make a particular appeal to President Kabila to take the lead in this. He has the most important role to play, not just in moving forward dialogue among the Congolese people, but much more generally in creating an atmosphere that will allow truly open and representative dialogue to flourish.

In this respect, the United Kingdom very much welcomes the pledge in President Kabila's inaugural statement to restore normal democratic life in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with full respect for human rights and justice, and to hold nationwide

elections. We call on all the Lusaka parties fully to respect human rights and humanitarian standards. It also might be useful to explore the scope for a multi-donor mission to assess the humanitarian situation across the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which would give us a much better understanding of the scale of the problem and the level and kind of assistance needed.

Then, there is the question of the United Nations role. I come to this thirdly because the way in which we can move forward depends first on the progress made by the parties. In December last year, we rolled over the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) for a further six months. We need to use this period to move forward. The United Nations has been in limbo for far too long, and the Secretary-General made it clear to us this afternoon that he wishes this to change.

But MONUC, so ably led by Ambassador Morjane and keen to carry forward its purpose, can deploy and carry out its role only in parallel with implementation by the parties to the peace process. The parties must give MONUC their full, practical cooperation. As host Government, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has a particularly important role in this respect. Free access and security must be provided for MONUC, as well as for humanitarian agencies. We very much welcome the early positive indications from President Kabila in that respect. At the request of the Council, the Secretary-General will this month be reviewing the situation on the ground and the MONUC concept of operations. We want to move forward, but we can do so only when the Secretary-General is satisfied that the conditions are right and will allow us to play a useful role. This depends on forward movement by the parties and on clear evidence of support and protection from the Government and armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We now have a programme and a clear opportunity for making real progress in implementation of the peace process, leading up to the Council's meeting on 21 and 22 February. Let us make the most of it. The United Kingdom will contribute forcefully to that objective. Let us hope that we will soon be applauding President Kabila for making the crucial difference in ensuring the success of that programme.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): May I extend warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on Tunisia's assumption of the presidency of the Council.

In welcoming President Joseph Kabila to the Council today, may I also extend our condolences to him and to his family on the death of the late President Laurent Kabila.

We commend the initiative of President Kabila to engage with the international community at this potential turning point. We have studied carefully and welcomed his inaugural speech to the nation and we have heard his comprehensive address to the Council today. We welcome his clear commitment to bringing a strong impulse to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement so that it may lead not only to an effective ceasefire, but also to a restoration of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region generally.

The meetings of President Kabila with Presidents Mbeki and Chirac, Secretary of State Powell, the United Nations Secretary-General and now the Security Council are evidence of his stated intention to contribute to the relaunching of the Lusaka Agreement and of his commitment to helping the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in carrying out its tasks. Yesterday's meeting with President Kagame was of particular importance and a most encouraging indication of the intention of both parties to respect the Agreement.

Out of the recent tragedy has come, we believe, a widely perceived opportunity to reach a peaceful settlement to this conflict. We have urged the parties to the conflict to engage in direct contact together in this regard. We reiterate that call today and we urge each party to take steps to engender the confidence of the other parties.

It is our absolute conviction that the Lusaka Agreement provides the consensual basis for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the wider region. We urge all the parties to the conflict, and in particular the new authorities in Kinshasa, to seize this opportunity in a sustained process and to get together behind the Lusaka Agreement and to commit

themselves to its full implementation in letter and in spirit.

We welcome President Kabila's emphasis on this essential point in his remarks earlier. The Lusaka Agreement offers, by far, the best way forward. We strongly believe that no party to the Agreement should attempt to manipulate it in its own interest, but should honour strictly its obligations under it. All parties must move towards the national dialogue and reconciliation, as foreseen in the Lusaka Agreement, in order to form a freely elected, democratic Government that is representative of all the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome President Kabila's stated commitment to solving political problems within the framework of the inter-Congolese dialogue.

We urge the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to make early contact with the facilitator with a view to making early progress on this issue. In this regard, we have noted Foreign Minister Okitundo's call for a co-Facilitator in the inter-Congolese dialogue as further evidence of the willingness to fully re-engage with the process. A permanent cessation of hostilities, the full withdrawal of foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the disarmament and demobilization of armed groups and the securing of international borders in accordance with the Lusaka Agreement and subsequent disengagement plans is an absolute priority now to be worked towards together by all involved parties.

We welcome the commitment of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to collaborate closely with MONUC, as clearly stated by President Kabila in his inaugural statement and again here today, so as to enable it to discharge its mandate efficiently. We call on all the parties to move immediately to bring about the conditions in which the United Nations can assist and in which MONUC can effectively operate. We look forward to the next report of the Secretary-General, in which he will address the future shape of the United Nations presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, we expect also that the United Nations operation will enjoy the full cooperation of all the parties involved. President Kabila has expressed today his own commitment in this regard.

The European Union has said, and we fully share the conviction, that lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be possible only through a negotiated peace settlement that is fair to all parties, that respects the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, that upholds democratic principles and human rights and that takes account of the security interests of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and all other countries of the region.

President Kabila has committed to bringing about the normalization of democratic life, strengthening of the rule of law, consolidation of democracy and good governance and a guarantee of human rights and justice. We welcome these clear commitments, and we look forward to evidence of early progress. We also look forward to building on this meeting today and on this clear opportunity for peace at the meeting of the Political Committee later this month. We see the presence of President Kabila today as a signal of his commitment to this process, and we welcome this pragmatism.

We hope that President Kabila, having listened to the views of Council members, will return to Kinshasa with a clear understanding of the shared expectations of the international community and with a strengthened purpose to re-engage with the Lusaka process and to comply fully with the resolutions of this Council. The international community has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to help the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Once again, on our part, we reiterate our willingness to do so. Ireland and the Irish people have shown solidarity with the people of the Congo since long before that country won its independence. As an active participant in United Nations peacekeeping operations, Ireland shared the pain that accompanied Congo's birth as a nation. Ireland will now spare no effort within this Council in support of the process that will bring to the Congolese people the peace, development and tranquillity that they surely deserve and that their leaders can bring about.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Ireland for his kind words addressed to me.

Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to kindly request the members of the Council to be as brief as possible in their statements so as to allow time for President Joseph Kabila to comment on the Council members' important statements if he wishes.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important meeting today.

We have noted that one of the priorities in the work of the Council this month is the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This morning, Ambassador Morjane gave us a very important briefing. This afternoon, we are having this formal meeting. This is the beginning of a series of meetings on the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Council. We hope that all this input will advance the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

China warmly welcomes President Joseph Kabila to the Security Council for this useful dialogue and interaction with the members of the Council. We also welcome the important statement made by President Kabila just now. A few days after his assumption of the presidency, he has come to the Council to have this dialogue with us. This demonstrates his Government's sincere determination to advance the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would also like to take this opportunity to once again convey the sincere condolences of the Chinese Government and people to him for the loss of his father, the late President Kabila.

China is of the view that the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now at a critical juncture and a potential turning point. At present, it is imperative to seize the opportunity to move the peace process forward so that progress can be made. China is happy to note that President Kabila has repeatedly emphasized his intention to implement the Lusaka Agreement and his commitment to the inter-Congolese dialogue so as to achieve national reconciliation. We highly appreciate this commitment by President Kabila. We are of the view that the inter-Congolese dialogue is of great significance.

The solution to the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is ultimately up to the people of that country. It is our hope that all the Congolese people will answer the call of President Kabila and will seize this opportunity to come back to the negotiating table to resolve their issues peacefully, free from outside interference.

China also is convinced that the United Nations and the Security Council have a positive role to play in a solution to the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and supports their playing that role. China hopes that we can make the most of this momentum and make timely political decisions.

China believes that the role of the United Nations, and that of the Security Council in particular, should be reflected in the support given to the sovereign Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its efforts to restore peace there. Experience shows that we cannot afford to underestimate the difficulties that may occur along the road ahead. China is convinced that, in order to overcome those difficulties and constantly to push forward the peace process, the relentless efforts of all the parties, including the United Nations and the Security Council, are required. However, the political will of the parties to the conflict cannot be replaced by any other factors.

We look forward to all of the parties seizing the opportunity, to their taking a courageous step and building up mutual trust and confidence so as to create conditions for breaking the impasse and for the United Nations to play a role in this process. We hope that the Security Council will, in light of the changing situation, take specific steps for the deployment of the second phase of MONUC. This deployment should be based on considerations regarding the prevention of the outbreak of internal conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It should also be based on the effective guarantee of security along the borders between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours. China supports regional organizations in their continued efforts. However, we hope that all of these efforts will be coordinated.

Before concluding, my delegation would like to reiterate that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be fully respected and safeguarded. This is the prerequisite for a solution to the conflict in that country. It is also a principle with which all Member States of the United Nations should comply.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Mr. President, I would like to say how pleased my delegation is at your assumption of the presidency of the Council, and I would like to reiterate to you our readiness to contribute to the successful fulfilment of your functions.

On this solemn occasion, I also wish to extend a cordial welcome to the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We regret the painful fact of the death of his father, former President Laurent Kabila, and we wish to convey words of comfort to his family and to the Congolese people as a whole.

The presence of President Joseph Kabila in the Security Council, and his statement at this meeting, are of great significance to peace in the world and give us grounds for hope. They reflect a clear commitment to peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — a peace that we recognize to be the profound aspiration of 52 million Congolese, with whom we identify as members of the international community.

When we joined this Council, we promised the Members of the United Nations to work for the maintenance of international peace and security, and it is our intention to fulfil that promise. Therefore, we wish today to express a threefold purpose.

First we must work to ensure respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as of all the neighbouring States in central Africa, as has been expressed by this Council on many occasions.

Secondly we must demand, as is our duty, of all the signatory parties of the Lusaka Peace Agreement that they fulfil their obligations. This means the demobilization of irregular forces, political dialogue leading to free elections, the withdrawal of foreign troops from Congolese territory and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, among many other aspects.

The third component is to contribute to the prompt deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo under guarantees of security for its personnel, freedom of movement and logistical support, which are indispensable for the conduct of its operations.

We hope that the expectations of the moment will generate an atmosphere of confidence that will make it possible for us successfully to hold the meeting scheduled for 21 February between the Security Council and the Political Committee composed of the signatories to the Lusaka Agreement.

Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a commitment that this Council has to humankind. It is a commitment that we have assumed towards the Congolese people, the peoples of Africa and those of the entire world. We call for the reconciliation of the Congolese people with itself and with its neighbours, and we are prepared to contribute from this office to that goal.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Colombia for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Neewoor (Mauritius): Mr. President, allow me first to congratulate you warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. We thank you for starting your presidency with this important meeting on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and also for placing that country and Africa high on the Council's work programme during the month of February.

My delegation joins the other members in extending a very warm welcome in the Security Council Chamber to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

First of all, on behalf of the Government of Mauritius, I wish to present to the President, the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo the sincere condolences of the Government and people of Mauritius on the tragic death of the President's father, the late President Laurent Kabila. We also wish to felicitate the Government and people of Congo for the courage they have demonstrated during the difficult time following the recent tragic event in Kinshasa and for the remarkable manner in which the transition is being managed.

We have listened very attentively to the important statement that President Joseph Kabila has just made before the Security Council, and we feel greatly reassured by it. We believe that he has the right vision to achieve the goal of peace and security within the framework of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of his country. The road to peace and security there requires, obviously, the participation of all the Congolese people in an inclusive political process. The Lusaka Accord that all the Congolese parties, as well as the non-Congolese parties involved in the conflict, signed in July 1999 remains unquestionably the foundation upon which peace and normalcy should be built in the Congo.

Unfortunately, so far the inter-Congolese dialogue, which is an essential and integral part of the Lusaka Accord, has not really got off the ground, and in a significant measure this has resulted in the stagnation of the Lusaka process. We are confident that President Kabila will do what is necessary for the inter-Congolese dialogue to begin without delay, in accordance with the provisions of the Lusaka Agreement. We urge all the parties to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement to recommit themselves to implementing this Agreement in all its aspects and to comply with all its provisions.

In the wake of the recent events in Kinshasa, the Security Council promptly received communications from Rwanda and Uganda to the effect that they did not intend to take any advantage of the situation. This has been very much appreciated.

We have no doubt about the commitments of both Rwanda and Uganda for the full and early implementation of the Lusaka Agreement. In this regard, we welcome the meeting earlier in Washington, D.C., between President Kagame and President Kabila. That bilateral meeting will help build confidence for the peace process. In the same vein, my delegation would like to urge Rwanda and Uganda, the two important neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to take steps to implement the disengagement plans which they signed in Harare a few weeks ago along with the other parties. This important step should mark the beginning of a process for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, pursuant to the Lusaka Agreement.

There is absolutely no question that the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is necessary for the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement. Indeed, the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have already been waiting far too long for the deployment to take place. There are certainly many reasons why the Lusaka process has not moved forward in the last year and a half since it was signed by all concerned parties. The undue delay in the deployment of the United Nations peacekeeping operation has undoubtedly contributed to the stagnation of the Lusaka process.

Today there are hopeful signs all around for the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement. President Joseph Kabila has stated his clear intention, both in Kinshasa and in his important statement today in the Security Council, to move the peace process forward. We also have assurances in this regard from the other capitals concerned. We have no doubt that all the Congolese parties will also rally in a spirit of patriotism and solidarity and will help bring peace and stability to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The inter-Congolese dialogue can ultimately determine the future political course of the country. The United Nations, for its part, must fulfil its responsibility and deploy the long-awaited peacekeeping operation without any further delay, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1291 (2000) and 1332 (2000).

Before concluding, I wish to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Kamel Morjane, and his small team of observers for their remarkable work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also wish to pay tribute to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the other relief organizations for their important humanitarian work in providing relief and assistance to numerous refugees, internally displaced persons and other victims of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, I wish to state that Mauritius wishes to President Joseph Kabila every success in his endeavours to bring peace, unity and democracy to his great country.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Mauritius for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Kuchynski (Ukraine) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset to extend to you, Mr. President, my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I also wish to congratulate the members of your delegation, who assist you in your work as President. I assure you of the Ukrainian delegation's full support. I also wish to extend to your predecessor, Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani, my most sincere compliments on his excellent work during his term as President in January.

I also wish to join preceding speakers in welcoming Mr. Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to thank him

for his statement, which is very useful in connection with the Council's consideration of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, both internally and at the regional level.

On behalf of Ukraine, I also wish to extend sincere condolences to President Joseph Kabila and, through him, to all the Congolese people on the tragic death of his father, Laurent-Désiré Kabila.

(*spoke in English*)

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the most sensitive and complex issues on the African continent. We note with satisfaction that, as the Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Morjane, indicated this morning, the situation in the country at this moment is more favourable than ever before, which we believe is due to the strenuous efforts of President Joseph Kabila. We welcome the relentless high-level diplomatic efforts; we take them as an indication that leaders of the countries of the region are willing to search for ways to advance the peace process.

We also welcome and support the willingness of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — which was quite clearly expressed by President Joseph Kabila in his inaugural speech, as well as during his meetings in Paris and Washington and during his speech today at United Nations Headquarters — to move towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of transparency, a constructive approach and comprehensive dialogue with all the parties concerned.

At the same time, we can see that not everything goes as planned and expected. In this connection, we would like to underline, among other elements, the importance of additional political steps by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo aimed at promoting the inter-Congolese dialogue, which is, in our view, a key element in advancing the peace process in the country. To this end, it is necessary to intensify political negotiations between the Congolese parties — and this, quite obviously, is a very difficult task — in order to defuse the conflict. It is absolutely clear that a necessary precondition for this, or the necessary background, should be the withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as has been repeatedly called for in relevant Security Council resolutions.

We are convinced that the continued movement of the parties concerned towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict should, as before, be based on the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, as well as on the Kampala, Harare and Maputo arrangements, and that the language of arms cannot be a means of defusing the conflict.

We firmly believe that all parties to the conflict should continue constructive dialogue to that end and, within the framework of the documents, should take additional measures to accelerate the peace process. In our view, the activities of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be regarded as an impetus to that process. The parties concerned should do their best to facilitate its effective and comprehensive deployment, inter alia by fully implementing the provisions of the Status of Forces Agreement. I take this opportunity to reaffirm my country's readiness to contribute to United Nations peacekeeping efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It will be necessary, of course, to focus on solving quite a number of issues underlying the conflict that need to be addressed without delay. These include the withdrawal of foreign forces; the disarmament and demobilization of members of armed groups; ensuring the security of the borders between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi; the safe return of refugees; inter-Congolese dialogue, as mentioned before; the restoration of the national and regional economy; and regional economic cooperation.

These and other issues pertaining to the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement will be discussed at the meeting of its signatories to be held on 21 and 22 February here in New York. We are certain that all these problems, difficult and complex as they are, can be resolved only through constructive dialogue among all parties to the conflict, one of which is the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, I would like to wish President Joseph Kabila and his Government patience, tolerance, perseverance and every success along the bumpy road to peace and prosperity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Ukraine for the kind and encouraging words he addressed to me and to my delegation.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency, and I thank Ambassador Mahbubani for his excellent presidency last month.

My delegation joins others in welcoming His Excellency President Joseph Kabila to this meeting. We commend him for his diplomatic initiatives and for his very important statement. We also would like to join others in expressing condolences to President Kabila on the tragic death of his father.

The Government of Norway supports the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement as the way forward towards a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We note with great interest President Joseph Kabila's expressed desire to pursue a policy of reconciliation, and we urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to engage in constructive dialogue with all involved parties in accordance with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, including through the rapid commencement of a constructive inter-Congolese dialogue. Full commitment to peaceful negotiations remains indispensable in the search for a lasting solution to the conflict in the war-torn country of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Against that background, we look forward to immediate and constructive initiatives from President Joseph Kabila that will re-energize the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, and we would also like to welcome his expressed intent to cooperate fully with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). It is important to facilitate the full deployment of MONUC. Furthermore, all parties involved in the conflict must continue to exercise restraint and must comply with the provisions of relevant Security Council resolutions.

The implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement must be based on full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on the legitimate security concerns of all parties, including States neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government of Norway emphasizes the need for the complete withdrawal of all foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo based on schedules drawn up by the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the Joint Military Commission; the disarmament and demobilization of armed groups; and the subsequent safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons. We urge all parties and ethnic and armed groups to cease acts of violence against civilians, to respect and protect human rights, and to ensure the safety and security of all international personnel.

Furthermore, the efforts to rebuild a peaceful and democratic Democratic Republic of the Congo must take due account of the ongoing illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth in the country. We strongly urge the parties to the conflict to cooperate with the United Nations panel of experts established in that regard. The role of diamonds and other forms of resource wealth in fuelling conflict is well established, and any party's lack of cooperation with the expert panel will be viewed in that light.

A number of high-level meetings have taken place over the course of the past few months, indicating the willingness of leaders to support peace efforts in the Great Lakes region. My Government wholeheartedly supports such regional initiatives. Notwithstanding the responsibility of the Congolese Government and of Congolese leaders in generating democratic developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the active and constructive involvement of African leaders is crucial for the achievement of comprehensive and sustainable peace in the region. My Government attaches great importance to the planned meeting between the Political Committee of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the Security Council, to be held in New York later this month. We urge the parties to explore thoroughly, through prior regional consultations, the political avenues that could be available for further consideration at that meeting. In that light, we note with interest the recent meeting in Washington between President Kabila and President Kagame.

The Government of Norway has supported financially the efforts to facilitate the process towards inter-Congolese dialogue, and we would consider doing so again if tangible progress were to emerge. Last year, Norway also allocated some $20 million to humanitarian and peace-building assistance to the Great Lakes region. Through our budget for 2001, a similar amount has been tentatively allocated with a

view to contributing to conflict resolution in the broader perspective of development.

In conclusion, let me compliment the work done so far, under the most difficult of circumstances, by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Dinka; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Morjane; the MONUC Force Commander; military and civilian personnel; and other United Nations and international personnel, including those of non-governmental organizations, operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Norway for the kind words he addressed to me.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): The Jamaican delegation is pleased, Sir, to see you presiding over the Council's deliberations for the month of February. We wish to assure you and the delegation of Tunisia of our full cooperation and support. Let me also express our appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Kishore Mahbubani and to the delegation of Singapore for the dynamic and effective manner in which the affairs of the Council were handled last month.

Let me join others in welcoming President Joseph Kabila to the Security Council. On behalf of the Government and the people of Jamaica, I wish to extend condolences to President Kabila and to his family on the untimely passing of his father, with whom the Security Council had the honour to meet in January of last year. Now that the mantle has passed to President Joseph Kabila, we assure him of my delegation's continued support for and solidarity with the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our message to President Kabila today is one of encouragement as he and the people he leads face the daunting challenges that lie ahead.

As the Secretary-General indicated, President Kabila may be assured that the international community stands ready to assist in bringing peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the entire Great Lakes region of Africa.

The fact that he has come to New York to meet with the Security Council so soon after his inauguration is a clear indication of his wish to move the process forward. We are indeed heartened by his recent diplomatic initiatives, both regional and international, and are encouraged by his call to all parties to come to the peace table. These gestures, reiterated in his important statement to the Council today, could be important confidence-building measures, which we hope will be reciprocated.

My delegation is well aware of how seemingly intractable the problems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo appear to be. But no matter how difficult it might seem to be to find solutions, the suffering of the people involved impels us to use our best efforts to put an end to their misery. My delegation continues to believe that the Lusaka Agreement remains the most viable basis for sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this connection, we support the call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and reaffirm our support for the unity, stability and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). We also call on all concerned to demonstrate their commitment to implement the Kampala and Harare agreements, as well as to cooperate with the Libreville process.

Jamaica fully supports the pursuit of the inter-Congolese dialogue. We believe that this political dialogue is an indispensable step towards national reconciliation. We therefore welcome the commitment, stated here today by President Kabila, to resume the process of national dialogue, and we emphasize the need for full cooperation by all concerned with the office of the Facilitator.

We urge those who believe that they have a legitimate right to justice and to governance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to pursue it through the processes provided for at the bargaining table and not through the barrel of a gun. We firmly believe that there is no military solution to the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Another issue of concern to my delegation is the continued illegal exploitation of mineral resources. The interim report of the panel of experts clearly indicates the link between the conflict and the exploitation of resources which should be used for the economic and social development of the people of the Congo. As the conflict widens, with some 16 million people being affected, including over 2 million internally displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring States, we have

the makings of an immense humanitarian tragedy, the extent of which is unknown, given the lack of access for humanitarian workers to the populations in need.

We realize, however, that the humanitarian and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be addressed in a lasting manner only within the framework of a comprehensive peace in a regional context involving the entire Great Lakes region. Jamaica therefore fully supports the holding of an international conference on the Great Lakes, in parallel with the national dialogue, under the auspices of the OAU and the United Nations.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express appreciation to the Secretary-General, to his Special Representative, Ambassador Kamel Morjane, and to the men and women of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their efforts to bring peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We look forward to the report of the Secretary-General, which will set the stage for the Council's discussions later this month with the Political Committee of the Lusaka Agreement and for further action by the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Jamaica for her kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, we should like to wish you, Sir, and your delegation, every success during your presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. We should also like to thank Ambassador Mahbubani of Singapore and his delegation for their work during Singapore's presidency last month.

I should like to welcome President Joseph Kabila, and I extend to him our condolences on the tragic death of his father, the late President Laurent-Désiré Kabila, one of those who was present at the beginning of the struggle for independence in Africa. The Russian Federation wishes President Kabila every success in his high office, which was entrusted to him by his compatriots at a very difficult and trying time for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Russia's principled position in support of a political settlement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the basis of the Lusaka Agreement, as soon as possible, remains unchanged. In resolutions 1304 (2000) and 1332 (2000), the Security Council sent the parties to the Congolese conflict a clear signal about the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the steady implementation of commitments undertaken under the Lusaka Agreement, without any backing away. Russia hopes that the very tragic events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will not in any way jeopardize the hopes for a political settlement to the protracted Congolese crisis on the basis of the preservation of the territorial integrity of the country, in accordance with the Lusaka Agreement, subsequent agreements and Security Council resolutions.

We call on all the parties to the Congolese conflict to resist the temptation to take advantage of the present situation for their own ends. We believe that it is extremely important for all parties to cooperate fully with the United Nations Mission in implementing the Lusaka Agreement, the resolutions of the Security Council and the decisions of regional summits. We attach great importance to the actual launching of the Congolese national dialogue, with the participation of all political forces in the country, through international facilitation as provided for in the Lusaka Agreement.

We welcome the declaration by President Joseph Kabila that he is committed to the goal of national reconciliation. We call on all the parties to the conflict not to allow any violations of human rights or norms of international humanitarian law. We call on them to cooperate in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation of members of illegal armed groups with a view to establishing conditions of security for all countries of the subregion.

This month, there will be a review of how the parties to the conflict are implementing their commitments with regard to the ceasefire and disengagement. If the results of the review show that genuine political will exists on the part of the parties for implementing these tasks, that will certainly help the Security Council when it takes up the question of deploying phase II of the peacekeeping operation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): Given the lateness of the hour, please allow me to quickly but warmly

congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Council, and to say that the Council is in very good hands this month. Like the delegation of the United States, we are delighted to see a powerful constellation of Tunisian diplomats in this Chamber today.

I should also like to warmly welcome President Joseph Kabila and thank him for his statement. I should also like to thank him and you, Mr. President, as well as all of our other colleagues, for the warm compliments they paid to Singapore for its presidency last month.

I should also like to convey my deepest condolences to President Kabila for the tragic death of the late President Laurent-Désiré Kabila.

Clearly, the issue of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains one of the most complex and challenging crises facing the international community, and we have not heard much good news on this front.

The bad news is contained in my text. I will not read it out, but I do want to say that, despite all these setbacks, we believe that we now have a window of opportunity to relaunch the peace process. We hope that today's dialogue with President Kabila, under the presidency of Tunisia, will mark the start of a new process to bring peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to bring peace to the region. Later this month, the Security Council will have another occasion to meet with the members of the Political Committee and to resume the useful and productive dialogue initiated last June under the presidency of France.

We are therefore encouraged to hear President Joseph Kabila say that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will extend its full cooperation to the United Nations. The United Nations, in turn, stands also ready to extend its full cooperation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. But for this cooperation to take place, it is essential for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take several concrete steps.

Here again, the steps are spelled out in my text. I will not read them out, but I would like to emphasize the fifth point, in which we encourage President Kabila and his Government to cooperate fully with the neutral Facilitator in the inter-Congolese dialogue. The dialogue is a key element of the Lusaka Agreement, as indeed has been emphasized by so many speakers this afternoon, and we believe that, if successfully carried out, it can significantly change the political climate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the same time, the push for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be part of a collective effort. MONUC's deployment remains contingent on the disengagement of all foreign troops. All the parties must adhere fully to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, as well as to the Kampala, Maputo and Harare disengagement sub-plans. We urge swift implementation of all Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 1304 (2000) and 1332 (2000). There can be no peace as long as foreign forces remain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and we therefore strongly support the call made here a few minutes ago by the Secretary-General for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The search for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also part of a wider goal — the search for peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. We would therefore encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, under the stewardship of President Kabila, to continue the process of rapprochement with the Government of Burundi initiated by the late President Laurent Kabila at Libreville. Clearly, the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is linked to the peace and stability of the entire region.

In conclusion, the Democratic Republic of the Congo stands at a critical crossroads today. Let us not underestimate the enormous challenges that lie ahead. President Kabila not only has to contend with crippling colonial and cold-war legacies, but he must now also confront a complex political and military equation. He has undertaken the responsibility of leading the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo towards national reconciliation, peace, stability and development. We assure him of our full support in working towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The risks are great, but so are the rewards.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Singapore for his kind words addressed to me and to members of my delegation.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Tunisia.

At the outset, I should like to express our condolences to President Kabila for the loss of his late father, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, one of the first African militants of freedom and dignity for his people and for the countries of Africa. Tunisia, which has made African issues a priority of its foreign policy, welcomes this opportunity to hear him speak before the Council and to exchange views on the present and future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the potential for peace, security and stability in the Great Lakes region.

As a member of the Security Council, Tunisia insists on the need to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and control of the Democratic Republic of the Congo over its natural resources. The pillage of these resources, the property of the brotherly Congolese people, must stop. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has suffered and continues to suffer under the scourge of war and its negative consequences. They look forward to a better future of peace, security, stability and prosperity, as well as to the solidarity and support of the international community.

Tunisia is resolved and happy to stand with President Kabila and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at this critical time in their history. We believe that there is no alternative to a peaceful settlement of the dispute in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement is the best framework, accepted by all parties, for fulfilling that objective.

Tunisia endorses and encourages any initiative or step of President Kabila towards dialogue and national reconciliation. We would also endorse any initiative he might take towards dialogue, reconciliation and cooperation with neighbouring States, within the framework of mutual respect by all States for their independence and territorial integrity. All parties have expressed their willingness to move towards peace. We look forward to all parties' taking practical steps towards that objective. We believe that conditions are ripe for a new momentum in the peace process in which all parties would participate through immediate action to implement relevant Security Council resolutions, the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the deployment of the second phase of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

We look forward to enabling MONUC to deploy as soon as possible, reflecting the intention of the international community to assume its responsibility for the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The critical situation there and in the region calls for the firm resolve of the international community to help all parties to build a solid and lasting peace in the region, leading to prosperity, solidarity, stability, cooperation and development for the entire African continent.

In conclusion, I offer my best wishes to President Kabila as he leads the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo towards peace, security, stability and prosperity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I call on Major General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to respond, if he so wishes, to the comments of the members of the Security Council.

President Kabila: I should like first of all to thank all those who have expressed their condolences to me in person and, of course, to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I should also like to thank all those who have encouraged the Democratic Republic of the Congo to stay on track and to move on in the way that it has chosen — the way towards peace.

At the same time, I would like to remind the Security Council that its unwavering support is needed to accomplish this particular task in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of myself as the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to seeing to it that we reach those objectives that we have set — the final objective being the democratization of the political life of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Nevertheless, it would be inappropriate if I do not add that this chain of events will come about only if the forces that invaded the Democratic Republic of the Congo are one way or the other forced to get out of it so that it regains its national territorial integrity. All the good words that have been expressed will not erase the fact that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is under foreign occupation — an unjust occupation in relation to all international laws — and that this occupation must end as soon as possible.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Since I have no other speakers on my list, the Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

However, allow me at the end of this important meeting to express once again to His Excellency President Kabila the thanks of the members of the Security Council for his initiative of coming to meet with us and exchange views on the situation. The members of the Council have listened with great attention to President Kabila's important statement — a very clear message concerning his view of the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and ways and means of re-establishing peace and security in the Great Lakes region. The Security Council will be following this matter with a great deal of attention during the course of the month.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.